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SUBJECT: NEPAL: NATIONAL CONGRESS PRESIDENT KOIRALA:  
TILTING AT WINDMILLS?

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty. Reasons 1.4 (b/d)

SUMMARY

1. (C) In his August 6 courtesy call on National Congress (NC) President G.P. Koirala, the Ambassador urged the parties to reach consensus before talks with the Maoists. Koirala replied that he wanted to stay outside the government to push for peace and position himself for power once elections were possible. He believed that without India's goodwill the Maoist insurgency could not be solved.

THE NC'S PLAN

2. (C) Koirala told the Ambassador that although India had advised him to join the government coalition, he would not - for three reasons. He explained that to do so would tarnish the party's image because it had been critical of the King. Second, its voice would be weaker because it would have to toe the coalition's line. Finally, Koirala said that if he and NC could solve the Maoist problem, the party's image would improve and NC would win the next election. The Ambassador asked him whether he was worried that the Maoists might use the rift among the legitimate political forces and slow down the effort to build consensus, which was needed before talks with the Maoists. While Koirala acknowledged he would have to be cautious about that, he focused on the King being the hurdle. He complained that the King did not seem to be interested in talking about the Maoist problem.

PURSUING PEACE WITH THE MAOISTS

3. (C) Koirala informed the Ambassador that the party had authorized him to have a dialogue with the Maoists in order to bring them into the political mainstream. Koirala stated that he was hoping to first lay the groundwork with the international community and civil society before going to the other parties. Koirala stated his belief that a political settlement was possible, however, the most important element would be convincing the Maoists to lay down arms. He opined that if the Maoists agreed to do so, the UN could manage the process, along with rehabilitation and reintegration. Mentioning that he had met with UN Under Secretary for Political Affairs Tamrat Samuel, Koirala said he was concerned that although he had no objections to a UN role, it may not be palatable to the King, the people or India.

4. (C) In reply to the Ambassador's query about the possibility of secret talks in a third country, Koirala said that would depend on India. Talks could be done anywhere, Koirala noted, however, without India's goodwill, he did not think the problem would be solved. Koirala continued that he had suggested to Indian interlocutors that, if there were UN-mediated talks, India could come as an observer. According to Koirala, India agreed to take his proposal under consideration. Koirala went on to say that India agreed to his suggestion that because of Nepal's historic mistrust of India's intentions, India needed to remain in the background when talks with the Maoists occurred. However, Koirala thought India needed to pressure the Maoists. Continuing his efforts to promote possible peace talks with the international community, Koirala told the Ambassador he had also discussed a possible UN role with the Chinese Charge d'Affaires. The Charge told Koirala that while the PRC could accept a UN presence at talks, it would not accept UN mediation.

COMMENT

5. (C) The Ambassador repeatedly stressed to Koirala that there has to be unity among the legitimate political forces, including civil society and the palace, about how to go forward with the Maoists. Koirala, however, seems to be out of the loop and believes he is pursuing a peace initiative that will cause the other legitimate political parties to fall in line.

MORIARTY